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ABSTRACT

How does the college faculty member involved in off-campus teaching plan for intensively scheduled classes comprised of forty hours of instruction in three weekends? Two main areas of concern are (1) the differences between these students and those found on the main campus and (2) methods of providing variety in instruction to maintain a reasonable balance of motivation and production. The Southern Illinois University's School of Technical Careers offers a nontraditional baccalaureate degree program in which nontraditional students can, in a reasonable time frame, receive a baccalaureate degree through the extended campus delivery system at military bases spread throughout the U.S. The degree is closely tied in with the student's career goals and grants credit for competencies gained in extra-institutional experiences. The students in the program often have higher expectations than regular campus students. These students also infrequently have spontaneous learning styles. Fertile areas of potential research suggest themselves in quantifying distinctions between these students and those on the traditional campus. Adult students are less accustomed to locating library materials and more hesitant in seeking assistance. Activities which are appropriate for such students include those that encourage student interaction, peer evaluation, competency based testing, and integration of educational technology into the curriculum. (LRA)

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PLANNING FOR THE INTENSIVELY SCHEDULED CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Those of us who, for one reason or another, find ourselves teaching in environments we could never have conceived in our wildest fantasies realize we need to carefully juggle constraints of time with professional commitment. Many of our students are adults, often with fulltime jobs and diverse additional responsibilities. We look at their career goals as we design a curriculum to fit into the demands of eight hour teaching days. The more we can learn about these students through our own perceptions, complemented by literature and research in the field, the better we can serve them.

This paper describes the non-traditional degree program being offered at Southern Illinois University's School of Technical Careers. Non-traditional students can, in a reasonable time frame, receive a baccalaureate degree through the extended campus delivery system at military bases spread throughout the United States. Faculty, both those involved in on-campus teaching and part-time adjunct faculty with primary commitments in the appropriate business area, fly out on three weekends to present courses comprised of 40 hours of class instruction. With such demands, how does one keep the integrity of the course work, yet maintain flexibility in activities so that the teaching-learning is an interactive process?

The main concerns are addressed, from the point of view of the teaching faculty: (1) Can we describe some of the differences between these students and those found on the "main campus" and (2) What are some methods of providing variety in instruction to maintain a reasonable balance of motivation and production?

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Those of us who find ourselves teaching in environments inconceivable in our wildest fantasies often speculate on our own flexibility that made us receptive to such change. We also wonder about the students who enroll in such courses. By such courses I mean those taught on military bases by a faculty that are part of the "working class jet set." We often fly several thousand miles for a weekend's teaching. We frequently ask what motivates the adult student, many times with a fulltime job and diverse additional responsibilities, to decide to commit his/her remaining free time to return to the classroom? Is the goal a desire for a fuller life, or is the motivation the increased financial and professional mobility offered by the credentials of the degree? The more we can learn about this student through his reflective statements and through our growing perceptions, the better we can serve him.

Likewise, who are these transplanted faculty members who regularly travel thousands of miles to teach on makeshift campuses? Is it possible for them to maintain the academic rigor of the course work while confronted with the uncertainties of airline schedules and missing baggage (containing handouts for two full days of classwork)?

This paper, as the title suggests, shares some reflections on the non-traditional teaching environment by describing a specific degree program offered by Southern Illinois University's School of Technical Careers. It also discusses planning for the intensively

scheduled class by both the school and an individual faculty member.

The major concerns addressed, from the point of view of a member of the teaching faculty, are: (1) Can we describe some of the differences between the traditional on-campus student enrolled in the same course and the non-traditional adult student? and (2) What are some methods of providing variety in instructional techniques to maintain a reasonable balance of motivation and production?

Related Background. To help in an understanding of the instructional setting, a description of the School of Technical Careers is essential. Originally founded in the 1950's through the efforts of some farsighted individuals in the State Department of Vocational Education, the School was then the Vocational Technical Institute (VTI), an adjunct unit of the University. Its status was separate, and not really equal, in the eyes of most of the "main" campus. There was a geographical separation of some ten miles, in addition to an intellectual distinction felt by many. For example, even though the technical writing course offered at VTI was rigorous, it was only considered applicable to the associate degree. Students who tried to apply that credit when transferring into diverse baccalaureate programs in the University found no consistency in the articulation process. This situation was true as late as the early seventies, the time in the United States and in many other countries that nurtured the growth of community colleges and an awareness of the possible diversity of student populations.

Then on July 1, 1973, the former VTI became a school of the University to provide a full range of options and opportunities for occupationally oriented students. This new status dictated that the

School be headed by a Dean. Under his leadership the School of Technical Careers (STC) awakened to the excitement of the expanded delivery systems for technical and professional education. This transition is not unique to this institution. Some saw the vacuum and acted; others, perhaps less prepared for change, hesitated and the opportunities moved in other directions.

One of the first efforts of the School was to start to offer its own Baccalaureate Degree. It is an individually designed degree, closely tied in with the student's career goals. Every effort is made to grant credit for competencies gained in extra-institutional experiences. No student graduates who has not received credit for work experiences or who has not served an internship for a minimum of six semester hours. And the geographical barrier has been removed for most programs with the opening this year of a brand new building on a central part of the campus.

The educational delivery system was designed for both on- and off-campus students. The on-campus students are usually transfer students from community colleges and graduates of our own associate degree programs. The off-campus students are predominantly members of the armed forces who attend classes during their off-duty weekend hours on their own military bases. It is for these students that the intensively scheduled class is planned.

Obviously we are not in this delivery system alone. From Stephen K. Bailey's visits to thirteen major military bases, he estimated 800,000 military personnel enrolled in part-time college or university courses on military bases. He termed these efforts one of the largest postsecondary educational enterprises in the United States. Unfortunately he also decried the quality control

behind such programs.[1] While this paper does not attempt to address his findings, it does contend that quality is possible if faculty seriously view the limitations and the exciting opportunities possible in this teaching environment and with these students.

Characteristics of the Students. Other than their being members of the U.S. Navy, Air Force, or Marine Corps, what characteristics do these students share? We might look at age and mind set. Although all are considered adult students, the age range is diffuse. The younger ones are often there because they may have had some college courses, but had not finished degrees before entering the service. Many of them are fresh from technical schools, competent in newly learned skills. Others are near the age of military retirement and planning ahead to the need for the academic credential as they enter the job market. Some few are contemplating leaving the service and are preparing themselves with new competencies offered through the university degree programs. The extended campus degree programs offered by the School of Technical Careers are for aviation management, electronics systems, health services, and fire science.

Looking at mind set, one finds the students on the whole as receptive, performing well, especially when they help define their own goals. Their expectations are often higher than those of students on the regular campus. Perhaps because of the military background and their maturity, they are systematic and thus expect structure. Much of their training in the military is stimulus-response, dominated by criterion referenced objectives. These objectives are often translated into carefully delineated task analyses. They infrequently have "spontaneous" learning styles,

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yet their sophisticated and varied backgrounds can be fertile sources for interactive exercises that involve brainstorming and idea generation. One student mentioned that this sharing was one of the reasons he continued in the program at his base.

According to Morgan, Holmes, and Bundy,[2] the law of learning by association gives adults a decided advantage "...because adults are able to associate the related parts of a concept and arrive at a new conclusion. They can transfer principles learned in one situation to related situations." Although their "fluid" intelligence, the ability to absorb new knowledge diminishes from about age 20, their "crystallized" intelligence can be greatly increased. The teacher thus needs to draw upon familiar analogues in presenting new materials.

Possibilities for Research. Fertile areas of potential research suggest themselves in quantifying distinctions between these students and those on the traditional campus. I'm currently comparing scores on the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal. The Meyer-Brigg's scale of introversion-extroversion would be another pertinent measure. One interesting study was done with the external degree students from the Empire State College of the State University of New York, the New York State Regents External Degree Program of Goddard College, Plainfield, Vermont.[3] A questionnaire examined frequency with which these students used libraries and selected library materials. One finding was that they frequently use public library facilities, yet experience many problems with the unavailability of materials.

This data leads into the new portion. What are some methods of providing a variety of instructional techniques to maintain a

reasonable balance of motivation and production? Although the range is infinite, discussion will focus on (1) maximum use of library resources at diverse locations, (2) activities to challenge the mixed student populations, and (3) ways to integrate educational technology.

Library Facilities. Speaking from the experience of arriving at new locations unaware of the library resources available in a community, I can attest to the multiform of materials and responses to human needs at public and university libraries. My initial planning was to schedule a field trip to the library to help the students become informed of their local resources including use of reference indexes, government publications, and selected standard references in their field. Usual assignments would be to search for the answers to preplanned questions or to prepare annotated bibliographies on mutually acceptable topics. After a time or two of arranging visits to libraries that were barren of resources needed for my course, despite the size of the city, I moved into another phase, discovery.

Since students who attend these courses come from a wide geographical range, some driving fifty or more miles to attend class, they are not going to use the same libraries. Instead of all visiting the same library and our generalizing about other institutions, selected students reported back to the class on the available resources at the library in their area. These reports were fruitful sources of information about computer systems of information retrieval, interlibrary loan procedures, evident emphases of their libraries, etc. My experience has been that the adult students are less accustomed to locating library materials

and more hesitant in seeking assistance. Once familiarized with the procedure, they probably make better use of the resources than do the younger students.

Selected Activities. In examining the choice of activities in which to involve the student, the instructor's quest is not unlike that suggested by Bruner "...to devise materials that will challange the superior students while not destroying the confidence and will-to-learn of those who are less fortunate." Planned activities that encourage interaction among students have been fruitful. For example, in picking topics for research papers and in organizing formats into restricted scopes, some students agonize for hours. Brainstorming sessions allow the creative minds to open up new vistas for those who struggle so to simply get started with projects.

Similar interaction can draw on the strengths of both the intuitive and the analytic thinkers. For example, one class started with a timed, free-writing exercise to help all students start the creative flow of ideas, free from any evaluative judgments. Then the assignment was to transform that writing, using it as a data base, into a written response to a problem posed by the author. In this instance, the intuitive thinkers are helpful in inventing the problem situations; the analytic thinkers provide judgments in critically appraising formats.

Peer evaluation is useful in diverse roles for editing committees (layout, mechanics, creative decision making, sentence structure and variety) for writing classes. Pre-professional seminars concerned with career counseling that I have taught have used peer judgments in mock job interviews, some individual and some group.

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Other activities that recognize the diversity of the students' backgrounds can allow for some competency-based testing by perhaps allowing some to take extra versions of skill building tests. Because classes are usually scheduled for a total of eight hours on both days of the weekend, the last part of either day is a good time for activities that allow for a variable exit. One danger to students' feelings of self-worth, however, is to always have those with less academic strengths feel that they have no chance in the competition with scholastically superior peers.

One last method suggested for planning for these students is to integrate educational technology into the curriculum planning. Such planning is helpful in providing backup for students who have to miss some classes, and in alleviating the demands of an eight hour day. Cassette and videotaping have proven useful in aiding students review for tests and in recording outside experts' contributions. Recently I was able to use in California a tape of a North Carolina's airport manager's lecture to a class in aviation management on report writing demanded in his profession. (As many of us have found out, the adult students are invaluable in identifying the experts in their own fields who would have a worthwhile contribution to make to the class.)

Movies are good to stimulate ideas flowing in divergent channels, as well as providing an alternate medium for presenting technical information. Some particularly successful ones have been an excerpt from Eli Wallach's "A Tiger Makes Out" to identify dehumanizing encounters and Robert Townsend's "Up the Organization" to examine changing styles of management. However, I could also write a scenario about the vagaries of scheduling movies at sites

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some 1000 miles from the home base that would challenge the antics of the Keystone cops and the Marx Brothers.

One last media use that seems appealing and that I'm currently starting is to microfilm course materials, including information presently being transported on transparencies. I've had a small grant approved that allows me to microfilm these materials, and purchase a dual-purpose microfilm projector that can be used both by the individual and in the classroom.

The teaching environment is stimulating, the students are challenging, and we who enjoy the demands of the intensively scheduled classes are being revitalized.

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